

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF STATE

STATE

MAGAZINE



Picture Perfect

A Day in the Life
Of Mission Mexico

NOVEMBER 2008

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Hands reach out to snap a photograph of a scenic view in Mexico.

Photograph by Getty Images

Giving Thanks for Exceptional Service



Let me take this opportunity to wish all of you a happy and blessed Thanksgiving holiday.

I count it a great honor to work with the professionals who comprise the State Department, and I am glad when they get the recognition that they deserve.

This year, one of State's own, Kate Friedrich, received the distinguished 2008 Service to America National Security and International Affairs Medal awarded by the Partnership for Public Service, based on her exceptional contributions in leading the U.S.-Afghan Women's Council. The council, a major public-private effort to enhance the economic, social and political status of women in Afghanistan, created a microfinance program that has served 30,000 Afghan women, helping them to start businesses and improve their financial literacy—to name just some of its achievements. These women, deprived of their basic human rights in the 1990s, are now increasingly empowered and liberated—proving that our work can and does make a real difference.

Kate, a Civil Service employee serving as a special adviser to the Under Secretary for Democracy and Global Affairs, was honored at a gala awards ceremony in Washington, D.C., along with seven other award recipients, including a scientist who created a tsunami detection system and a person who is helping restore the quality of life for soldiers who have suffered traumatic battle injuries.

Service to America Medals are presented annually by the Partnership for Public Service to honor the achievements of America's public servants. They help shine the light on the important work that federal employees do.

This is not the first time State employees have been so honored. Previous winners include Edward Messmer (2007), Ambassador Nancy Powell and Christina Sanford (2006), Tobin Bradley (2005) and Ambassador Prudence Bushnell (2004). It is gratifying when their great work receives the recognition it deserves. I encourage all bureaus to consider nominating worthy employees for the 2009 Service to America Medals. To learn more about the application process and obtain online application forms, please go to www.servicetoamericamedals.org.

We in the Bureau of Human Resources want to serve you efficiently and well. If you have comments or suggestions, feel free to send them to me via unclassified e-mail at DG Direct. ■

news

Department Among Top 20 Best Places to Launch a Career

The Department of State was the top-ranked federal agency and ranked 12th among all employers in *BusinessWeek* magazine's annual assessment of the best places to begin a career. The listing, released in September, showed the Department had moved up from a 19th-place ranking in 2007.

This was the third consecutive year that the Department placed among the top 20 organizations in the *BusinessWeek*

listing. At number 12, the Department edged out, in order, Microsoft, Target, Abbott Labs and the National Aeronautics and Space Administration. The ranking is based on combined survey data from career services directors, undergraduate students and employers. Detailed information is at http://www.businessweek.com/magazine/toc/08_37/B4099magazine.htm.

BusinessWeek					
Best Places to Launch a Career 2008					
2008 Rank	2007 Rank	Employer	Industry*	2007 Entry Level Hires	Most Desirable Trait
1	3	Ernst & Young	Accounting	3300	College Major
2	1	Deloitte & Touche	Accounting	1996	College Major
3	2	PricewaterhouseCoopers	Accounting	3602	College Major
4	13	Goldman Sachs	Investment Banking	898	Academic Achievement
5	11	KPMG	Accounting	3219	College Major
6	45	Marriott International	Hospitality	275	Leadership Skills
7	5	Google	Internet	N/A	College Major
8	9	Lockheed Martin	Manufacturing	3894	College Major
9	4	IBM	Technology	2150	Analytical Skills
10	17	J.P. Morgan	Investment Banking	315	Leadership Skills
11	10	Teach For America	Nonprofit/Government	3026	Leadership Skills
12	19	U.S. State Department	Nonprofit/Government	307	Judgment
13	6	Microsoft	Technology	984	Problem Solving, Communication
14	N/A	Target	Retailing	3430	Leadership Skills
15	15	Abbott Labs	Pharmaceuticals		Leadership Skills
	N/A	NASA			
		Boeing			

Top Officials Paired With Diversity Groups

The Department of State values diversity as a moral and legal matter, and also because it wants to “bring in and keep the best and the brightest from all backgrounds,” said Under Secretary for Management Patrick F. Kennedy in his remarks to a diversity leadership reception in September.

The reception celebrated the launch of a new Diversity Governance Council initiative, the Leadership Liaison program. The council

is co-chaired by Under Secretary Kennedy and Director of the Office of Civil Rights John M. Robinson, who is also the Department’s chief diversity officer. The council applies a diversity lens to the development and implementation of all Department management policies and initiatives.

The council’s membership also includes John B. Bellinger, the Department’s legal adviser; Sean I. McCormack, assistant secretary for Public Affairs; Thomas A. Shannon, assistant secretary for Western Hemisphere Affairs; Daniel B. Smith, the Department’s executive secretary; Susan H. Swart, chief information officer; Harry K.

Thomas, director general of the Foreign Service and director of Human Resources; and Ruth A. Whiteside, director of the Foreign Service Institute.

The Leadership Liaison program matches council members with recognized Department employee affinity groups, which work for change, share ideas, broker solutions and provide networking opportunities for members. The groups are the Asian American Foreign Affairs Association, Carl T. Rowan Chapter of Blacks in Government, Disability Action Group, Executive Women at State, Foreign Affairs Chapter of Blacks in Government, Gays and Lesbians in Foreign Affairs Agencies, Hispanic Employees Council of Foreign Affairs Agencies, Thursday Luncheon Group and Young Professionals Society.

For further information, contact David King in the Office of Civil Rights at (202) 647-9295 or kingdj@state.gov.



OCR Director John M. Robinson, left, talks with Luis E. Arreaga, director of the Office of Recruitment, Examination and Employment, while in the background, Paul Schafer, manager of Accessible Electronic and Information Technology Projects, talks with Somer Bessire-Briers, the Department’s diversity outreach manager, who helped organize the reception.

Fallen PRT Member Receives High Honor

In a ceremony at Main State, top State Department officials in September honored a member of the Provisional Reconstruction Team in Sadr City, Iraq, who was killed there in a June attack by insurgents.

Steven Lee Farley, 57, a civilian employee of the Department, was remembered by Under Secretary for Management Patrick Kennedy for “a career built on military and civilian service” like that of former Secretary of State George C. Marshall. Farley spent 34 years in the military and, after retirement, volunteered for Iraq in 2007. As a senior governance specialist, he advised the Sadr City District Council. He and three other Americans were killed when a bomb exploded at a council meeting.

Farley volunteered for Iraq because “he wanted to live and work where he could make the biggest contribution to improving peoples’ lives,” said David Welch, assistant secretary for Near Eastern Affairs.

Saying “Steve’s sacrifice will never be forgotten,” Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice presented Farley posthumously with the Superior Honor Award. She also said he was a family man—he leaves behind both parents, a wife, three sons and a granddaughter. Several family members attended the ceremony in the Dean Acheson Auditorium,

and Farley’s wife accepted the award and a folded American flag that had flown over the U.S. Embassy in Baghdad.

The ceremony’s remembrances concluded with those of one of Farley’s former colleagues, Elisa Catalano. She said his courage inspired her and that another co-worker had said of Farley: “No terrorist can undermine Steve’s legacy.”



Secretary of State Rice presents the Superior Honor award to the widow of Steven Farley.

Italy's American Corner Celebrates First Anniversary

Italy's only American Corner, in Trieste, celebrated its first birthday in September.

Hosted by the Italian-American Association of Friuli Venezia Giulia, the AC keeps alive the dream of a longtime U.S. representative in Trieste, Paolo Bearz. The consulate closed in 1986, and Bearz, formerly the consulate's political specialist, became the U.S. consular agent in Trieste, holding that position until his death in February 2006.

The Italian-American Association, which he helped found, promotes the United States by showing American films in local schools, teaching English, hosting a traditional Thanksgiving dinner and hosting the AC. The association works with Trieste's large scien-



More than 200 local dignitaries and members of the Italian-American Association of Friuli Venezia Giulia applauded the inauguration of the American Corner on September 17, 2007.

tific community and the University of Trieste's American Studies program and has hosted four lectures by American diplomats and speakers at the AC. The AC has books, DVDs, audio-visual equipment and public Internet computers. In its first year, 5,000 people used the collection or participated in an association activity.

Giorgio Rosso Cicogna, president of the association and a former Italian diplomat, said the AC "gave us the opportunity to tell Trieste's youth about the traditional close ties between Trieste and the United States."

Elizabeth Griffin, the association's executive director, said the AC in coming months "will

be extremely busy," with the collection open 20 hours per week and the adjoining lecture hall booked almost weekly by local groups. She said the AC will show nine first-run U.S. films, continue its English classes and hold Halloween, Thanksgiving and U.S. election night celebrations—plus its annual cookie festival.

Embassy Uses Earth-friendly Practices



Consular Officer Amiee McGimpsey, left, and Linda Lopez, the ambassador's office management specialist, bike to work.

The U.S. Embassy in Reykjavik, Iceland, is striving to decrease its carbon footprint and establish environmentally friendly policies like those of Iceland itself.

Iceland's reliance on geothermal and hydropower plants to produce 80 percent of its energy means that all of the embassy's electricity, heat and hot water come from clean, renewable sources.

Furthermore, one-third of embassy employees ride bikes to work. In response, the general services office this summer installed a bike rack. The GSO also collects paper, plastic bottles and aluminum cans within the embassy and takes them to the Reykjavik recycling center.

More broadly, the embassy has sought bilateral cooperation on several renewable energy and climate-change-related projects. In August, Iceland signed two U.S. Department of Energy-initiated multilateral agreements involving research and development on geothermal power and the implementation of clean-energy policies.

In the private sector, Columbia University, the University of Iceland and Reykjavik Energy Company are jointly working on a carbon-sequestration project that would capture carbon dioxide and store it as a solid.



The Department's CFC coordinator, Shelly Kornegay, left, and Yvonne C. Sims, an executive officer at the Department of Labor, engage in CFC planning.

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Deadlines

The submission deadline for the January 2009 issue is November 15. The deadline for the February 2009 issue is December 15.

Department Launches 2008 Federal Giving Campaign

The State Department's 2008 Combined Federal Campaign got under way October 1 with a kick-off event in the Exhibit Hall at Main State. There, several of the charities that receive CFC funds made clear to employees why their giving is needed.

The campaign seeks to raise \$2.195 million from Department employees, part of the \$61 million sought by CFC from federal employees throughout the national capital area. The goal is slightly more than the \$2 million raised last year by the Department.

Employees can designate a pledge to one or more of approximately 4,000 charities receiving CFC funds, including several hundred that are new to the CFC roster. They may contribute in a lump sum by check or cash, or have their contribution withdrawn in one or more installments from their paycheck.

This year the CFC is particularly seeking support from young employees, said Yvonne C. Sims, a Department of Labor official on loan to the Department for the campaign. Presently, the campaign's most generous

donors, she said, are older employees, many of whom will soon qualify for retirement.

Younger employees are also being sought as "keyworkers," volunteers who approach co-workers to encourage them to contribute. The enthusiasm of younger employees, Sims said, means "they will be the biggest [CFC] cheerleaders" in their offices.

To gain younger employees' involvement, Sims said the campaign is advertising on the YouTube and MySpace Web sites, and encouraging online contribution via EmployeeExpress.gov or CFCNCA.org, the campaign's regional Web site. The latter means is also the best way for retirees to contribute, Sims said, since they do not receive pledge cards unless they request them.

The campaign, which runs through the end of 2008, will include special giving activities such as the annual Basket Raffle, where employees bid on baskets donated by the bureaus. Bureaus donated theme baskets in the 2007 campaign, and employees made dollar donations on chances of winning these baskets.

Standing Firm

FIRST BLACK DIPLOMAT BROKE MANY BARRIERS **BY CHRISTOPHER TEAL**

Most everyone knows Colin Powell was the first African-American Secretary of State, but few Americans, white or black, remember the name of Ebenezer D. Bassett, the first black American diplomat. With his appointment in 1869 by President Ulysses S. Grant to head the American Legation in Haiti, Bassett broke a color barrier, and he courageously brought the same revolutionary spirit to his work as a diplomat and a defender of international human rights.

Born in Connecticut on October 16, 1833, the grandson of slaves, Bassett became the first black student to attend college at the Connecticut Normal School, in 1853. Later, he would help abolitionist Frederick Douglass recruit black soldiers during the Civil War. His activism paid off when Grant won the White House and looked to reward his political supporters from the black community. Over the next eight years in Port-au-Prince, Bassett faced civil war, coups d'état and hurricanes, but proved his mettle through every crisis.

It was a time of great political instability on the island of Hispaniola. President Grant attempted to annex the Dominican Republic, causing chaos on both sides of the Haitian/Dominican border. Bassett frequently fought symptoms of malaria or other tropical illnesses while working under difficult circumstances with a hostile host government.

Severe Crisis

In 1875, Bassett faced his most severe crisis when he refused to turn a political opponent, General Pierre Boisrond Canal, over to Haitian authorities. The enraged president of Haiti, Michel Domingue, surrounded Bassett's

residence with thousands of armed soldiers, holding Bassett and his family hostage in a five-month siege.

With almost every new administration in Haiti, opponents had sought refuge in the missions of the American or European powers. However, U.S. policy was to accept asylum seekers only in extreme cases, if at all. Bassett knew Secretary of State Hamilton Fish, and perhaps President Grant himself, would not be pleased. However, Bassett believed Canal and other asylum-seekers would be killed by Haitian troops. Bassett led them inside his home, offering the slim protection international treaties and law afforded him.

Weeks became months as the siege dragged into the summer. Finally, Secretary Fish took action. Washington ordered a warship to steam toward Port-au-Prince. Domingue relented under the threat, and just after midnight on October 5, 1875, Bassett escorted Canal to board a ship to safely send him into exile.

Canal Returns

Months later, Bassett would have to deal with a coup against Domingue, and would see the eventual triumphant return of Canal and Canal's assumption of the presidency.

With the end of the Grant administration in 1877, Bassett resigned and returned to the United States, where he spent 10 years as a Haitian diplomat, Haiti's Consul General in New York City. He remained active in political and human rights matters until his death in 1908.

Bassett's work altered U.S. foreign policy. For the first time, a nation founded on equality had as its representative abroad someone who had previously been less than equal under the law. This movement toward equality and democratization would be a force impossible to turn back.

But Bassett was not just a symbol. His bravery and skill in negotiating set him apart from his contemporaries. In spite of conflicts, he was gifted at establishing personal relationships with foreign leaders and had a tremendous sense of political acumen.

This year marks the centennial of Bassett's death, but his principled adherence to American ideals lives on. ■



Bassett's student photograph from 1855.

The author is the public affairs officer at the U.S. Consulate in Guadalajara, Mexico. His biography of Bassett, "Hero of Hispaniola," is at <http://www.greenwood.com/catalog/C35195.aspx>.

'The Last 3 Feet'

FOREIGN PRESS CENTER CELEBRATES 40 YEARS OF SERVICE

BY JENNIFER ARCHIBEQUE

In July, a small unit of the Department called the Washington Foreign Press Center celebrated its 40th anniversary with a discussion about the center's history, an address by Under Secretary for Public Diplomacy and Public Affairs James P. Glassman and a reception that brought 300 journalists, press officers and current and former employees together to reflect on the center's importance to U.S. public diplomacy and to foreign correspondents.

The WFPC, a unit of the Foreign Press Center, opened in 1968 as part of the United

States Information Agency with a mission to provide the 160 Washington-based foreign correspondents and visiting journalists with background information to better inform their reporting and provide a platform for U.S. policymakers to engage with the world's media. Its mission unchanged, the center now is part of the Department's Bureau of Public Affairs.

Promoting Accuracy

Through press briefings, roundtable discussions, one-on-one interviews and

reporting tours throughout the United States, the WFPC provides the nearly 2,000 foreign correspondents based in Washington with accurate information about U.S. policy and society.

For 40 years, WFPC and its sister office in New York have "shown that open discussion of democracy, tolerance and personal freedom is a genuine path to better lives for all," Under Secretary Glassman said in his keynote address at the anniversary celebration. "We have an important role as a facilitator and a convener."



Panelists at the WFPC's 40th anniversary consider a question put to them by an attendee.

PHOTOGRAPHS: ED WARNER



Under Secretary for Public Diplomacy and Public Affairs James P. Glassman cuts the cake at the anniversary celebration.

Active WFPC members agree that the center opens doors that might have otherwise remained closed.

Paulo Sotero, a Brazilian journalist based in Washington since the 1980s, explained that when he arrived the WFPC provided him with the access every journalist needs.

"It was very difficult at that time and remains difficult for a Latin American correspondent to have access...but [the WFPC] was a place where you had an opportunity to learn more about the United States," said Sotero, now director of the Brazil Institute at the Wilson Center.

Conducting Tours

Matthias Rueb, correspondent for Germany's *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*, said WFPC's reporting tours are the center's greatest attraction.

"I have been on several trips—for example, one to the U.S. border regions—and I would have never been able to arrange a trip with the Border Patrol on my own," Rueb said.

Joyce Karam, correspondent for Middle Eastern daily *Al Hayat*, said the tours helped her better understand U.S. society.

"We went to Virginia and Maryland with the help of the Foreign Press Center to see

how Americans—normal Americans—vote," she said. "It contradicted many things you see published in the media or hear on Arab television every day."

WFPC Director Gordon Duguid said the center tries to ensure that foreign correspondents have the most accurate information and know the context in which U.S. policy is made and how U.S. society is organized.

"The context is vitally important to ensure that their reporting gives their readers, viewers or listeners information about how and why the United States takes a particular course of action," Duguid said.

Executive Outreach

The WFPC, he said, is a platform for the entire Executive branch to engage foreign media. The center works closely with other departments and agencies to feature briefings that provide all angles of a given issue. Secretary of Commerce Carlos Gutierrez is a frequent briefer.

"Before traveling abroad on behalf of the United States, I always visit the Foreign Press Center to brief reporters about the purpose of my travel," Secretary Gutierrez said. "It is a great way to reach foreign audiences with our message."

The WFPC also provides a space where Foreign Service and Civil Service employees and political appointees can forge relationships with foreign correspondents.

"It's a gathering spot for building the relationships that allow us to affect how the United States is presented to audiences overseas," said former FPC program officer Marti Estell.

Several officers and directors who have worked at the FPC mentioned the importance of these relationships in advancing U.S. objectives, and Duguid agreed, noting famed correspondent Edward R. Murrow's "last three feet theorem."

Murrow once said, "The real art in this business is not so much moving information or guidance or policy five or 10,000 miles...[but] moving it the last three feet in face-to-face conversation."

"The most important aspects of public diplomacy are the face-to-face encounters, listening to journalists, engaging them on their concerns and gaining a productive, professional relationship that helps you move the message," Duguid said. ■

The author is media relations officer for the Western Hemisphere in the Washington Foreign Press Center.



International media crowd the FPC's Democratic National Convention filing center, which was a workspace, briefing room and gathering place.

Explaining America

FOREIGN PRESS CENTERS HELP FOREIGN MEDIA COVER U.S. ELECTIONS
BY STACY MacTAGGERT

This year's presidential election has made headlines in U.S. media for nearly a year and a half. But interest regarding the election has also grown among foreign media outlets, such as Brazil's *O Globo* and the Tokyo Broadcasting System.

And a small office in the Department of State's Bureau of Public Affairs has had a front-row view on the growth in media interest from overseas. The Foreign Press Centers have helped direct international media attention to the American political stage this year.

The FPCs have reached billions of people worldwide by working with more than 3,500 foreign correspondents in the United States. The centers have gained reporters access in the presidential primaries, caucuses and conventions, and conducted 31 election briefings with political party representatives, polling firms, pundits and issues experts. And the FPCs have arranged 24 tours to take reporters to the presidential debates and key battleground states.

"[FPCs] are uniquely positioned to help the foreign press tell America's story," said James Dickmeyer, director of the FPC, which oversees the Washington Foreign Press Center. "The real story of what our democratic process looks like can be found only by visiting other cities and states. Foreign journalists need to understand the context in which Americans make their decisions—and the FPCs have helped them find that."

Mingxia Cheng, a reporter from Beijing's *Economic Observer* newspaper who participated in a March two-week FPC tour to the Texas primaries, agreed.

"It was a big help to get a real picture of what was going on," she said. "When I was in Texas and went to the events of candidates, I talked with voters and heard their views, which was more impressive than any interviews with political experts"

FPC reporting tours focused on the primaries, caucuses and



Clockwise from top: FPC Media Relations Officer Jean Duggan, right, helps a foreign correspondent at the 2008 Democratic National Convention; Journalist Jose Mereilles Passos of Brazil's *O Globo* newspaper checks announcements from the FPC's filing center at the Republican National Convention; Foreign journalists on an FPC tour to learn about election issues first-hand quiz a U.S. officer at a border crossing in Laredo, Texas.

debates, bringing more than 1,000 foreign media from 132 countries to election events in 15 states and to five debates. Participants included the U.S.-based foreign press, the FPCs' daily constituents and media members from overseas who were nominated by a U.S. embassy to attend an FPC tour. Supporting overseas posts in democracy promotion is a cornerstone of the FPCs' election-year goals, and its programming was increased in response to these overseas requests.

The FPCs also organized centers where foreign reporters could file stories at the Democratic and Republican national conventions. The FPCs have provided the national conventions with outreach to foreign media since 1984 and have run story-filing centers at every convention except in 2004. The filing centers also serve as briefing rooms, and 22 speakers visited the FPC filing centers this year for press events. The Department's offices of Broadcast Services and International Information Programs also attend the conventions to provide election-related programming and work with the FPCs throughout the year to develop outreach programs.

"[FPC] is helpful because, if you are not connected to a big organization in the United States, it helps us get a little more access to the stories," said Eric Sorensen, bureau chief of Canada's Global TV, who covered the Republican National Convention. "We may not be able to attract a Republican strategist on our own, but we have the opportunity as a group to attract this type of speaker."

Lourdes Heredia, a British Broadcasting Corporation reporter who attended FPC briefings at both conventions, summed up the FPCs' work by saying, "When [you're in] a city you've never been to before, the FPC is like a home."

The pinnacle FPC program this year was the Elections Embed Program, in which the FPCs partnered with the International Center for Journalists to bring 50 reporters to the United States. The reporters were embedded at local newspapers and radio stations across the country for the two weeks before the election, gaining a rare perspective on the American electoral process. They also saw American journalism in action and created the relationships that help build bridges between nations.

FPCs' active election-year programming was augmented by financial support from the Bureau of Public Diplomacy and Public Affairs. The programs demonstrated the unique platform the FPCs offer to promote Department goals worldwide on any topic.

"I am convinced that one of the best ways to share America's values and story with the world is through people-to-people exchanges, and nothing is more fundamentally American than our democratic process," said former Under Secretary for Public Diplomacy and Public Affairs Karen Hughes. "By bringing foreign journalists here to witness the vitality of American democracy, we share our best traditions of citizen participation, free speech, free press and representative government and help foster greater freedom worldwide."

This year's election season showed the value of exchanges, ongoing relationships and public outreach to the Department and to America's standing in the world. ■

The author is a media relations officer for East Asia and the Pacific in the Washington Foreign Press Center.



Freed hostages, from left, Keith Stansell, Marc Gonsalves and Thomas Howes receive a briefing from Ambassador Brownfield aboard a U.S. C-130 aircraft on U.S. efforts to free them.

Daring Ruse

EMBASSY WORKS WITH COLOMBIA TO GAIN HOSTAGES' RESCUE
BY MICHAEL TURNER

In a daring and creative rescue, the Colombian Armed Forces on July 2 freed 15 hostages, including three Americans, held by the terrorist Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia, or FARC. The action was a victory for the U.S. Embassy in Bogotá, which had worked tirelessly to free the trio since their capture in 2003.

FARC, which the Colombian government has battled for 44 years, lives off murder, extortion and large-scale narcotics trafficking, operating mostly deep in Colombia's jungles. The guerrillas hold hundreds of hostages for ransom, but former Colombian presidential candidate Ingrid Betancourt, 11 Colombian police

officers and soldiers, and the three Americans were FARC's crown jewels.

Americans Marc Gonsalves, Thomas Howes and Keith Stansell gained their freedom after more than five years in captivity thanks to an intrepid Colombian plan and years of U.S. assistance. The three had worked as contractors at the

embassy verifying coca eradication efforts. During a 2003 mission above a FARC-held area in Colombia's dense jungle, their plane experienced severe engine trouble. The plane's pilot, Tommy Janis, crash landed in a narrow clearing and all aboard survived, but arriving FARC guerrillas killed Janis and Sgt. Luis Alcides Cruz, a Colombian soldier on the mission. FARC held the three Americans for more than five years, constantly marching them and others through the jungle to escape detection.

Search Launched

From the moment the plane went down, the U.S. Embassy in Bogotá mustered an inter-agency search team. Throughout the ensuing five years, a dedicated cadre of

professionals in intelligence, diplomacy, the military and law enforcement searched alongside Colombian government representatives to find the trio. U.S. assistance, including training and information sharing, focused on bringing home the hostages and helping the Colombian government defeat FARC.

Finally, in 2008, repeated blows against FARC leadership disrupted its control over the units holding the hostages, and the Colombian military—in a plan code-named Operation Jaquemate (“checkmate”)—spotted an opening. They duped the FARC unit holding the hostages into believing FARC’s supreme leader wanted the hostages turned over to a nongovernmental organization that would send helicopters to the jungle for the hostages. The local FARC commanders, known as “César” and “Enrique Glasses,” were told to bring the hostages hundreds of miles through the jungle on foot to a designated landing zone in central Colombia.

On July 2, at the appointed time and place, two white, Russian-made MI-17 helicopters, bearing the logo of the fictitious NGO, arrived at the landing zone to recover the hostages. Each helicopter was in fact loaded with Colombian Special Forces troops, dressed and trained to act as members of the press and the NGO. The Special Forces team won over the two senior FARC unit leaders, and the FARC leaders and the 15 hostages, including Ingrid Betancourt, boarded the helicopter. Shortly after take-off, the Special Forces troops tackled the FARC leaders and put them in handcuffs in under a minute. The onlooking hostages were shocked.

“We’re the National Army,” the troops shouted. “You are free!”

Great Jubilation

The hostages’ jubilation was so great, one later said, they almost crashed the helicopter.

The Embassy’s deputy regional security officer, a U.S. military liaison officer and a hostage recovery expert met the helicopters at a forward operating base. The three American hostages were greeted by Ambassador William R. Brownfield, who presented them with their new U.S. passports. Their original passports had expired while they were in captivity.

The three Americans were soon transferred to Bogotá and greeted by three



Joyously returning from captivity, are at top, Keith Stansell; middle, Thomas Howes; and bottom, Marc Gonsalves.

dozen embassy comrades, including contractor employees who had flown with the trio years before and members of the special team that had spent years working to secure their freedom. After tearful greetings and hugs, the trio boarded a Texas-bound Air Force C-17 aircraft and enjoyed their first pizza and beer in five years.

Eleven hours after they first boarded that bulky, white helicopter deep in Colombia’s jungle, they landed as free men on American soil.

With hundreds of its employees having spent years trying to win the trio’s release, the embassy celebrated, too. When the embassy’s intercom announced that the Colombian government had freed the 15 hostages, an enormous roar went up

throughout the embassy, especially in the consular waiting room, which was packed with Colombians rejoicing in their countrymen’s freedom. Two days later, the U.S. Embassy in Bogotá enjoyed the sweetest Fourth of July party ever.

Operation Checkmate’s success could not have happened without the long-term strategic partnership between the United States and Colombia. While a score of U.S. government employees deserve credit for helping bring the hostages home, the United States also owes the Colombian government credit and thanks for pulling off such an audacious operation. ■

The author served as the Ambassador’s staff aide at the U.S. Embassy in Bogotá.



Ambassador Clifford Sobel plants one of 50 tree seedlings to open the Mais Unidos Volunteer Week in São Paulo in October 2007.

Partners in Progress

PUBLIC-PRIVATE EFFORT BRINGS DEVELOPMENT TO BRAZIL

BY CAROLINE M. SCHNEIDER

Fostering partnerships between U.S. and Brazilian companies and local communities is a key component of the U.S. Embassy in Brasilia's strategic agenda. Since 2006, Mission Brazil has used its Corporate Social Responsibility program to invest in efforts that help promote sustainable social and economic development while advancing American business interests.

To understand how CSR partnerships serve Brazil, consider the case of a man named Pedro. Just two years ago, Pedro was illiterate with few job prospects in Brazil's northeastern city of Salvador, which has some of the country's poorest communities and highest unemployment. Pedro learned to read and write through a local

nongovernmental organization. Then he joined the CSR-funded Enter Jovem youth employment program, where he developed computer skills and obtained an intern-

ship at a post office, where he was later hired full-time.

"I never thought I'd be hired by a large business like the post office," he said. "Now I plan to save to buy a house."

Enter Jovem has provided job skills to more than 6,500 at-risk Brazilian youth in a nation where approximately 35 million people are between the ages of 15 to 24, and jobs for the young are hard to find. With support from the region's utility company and a \$100,000 investment by Motorola—matched by funds from the U.S. Agency for International Development—Enter Jovem works through local community centers to help youth develop such skills as resume preparation, job searching, interviewing,

public speaking, professional behavior, computer training and entrepreneurship.

When Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice visited Salvador in March, she met Enter Jovem youth and educators and the state of Bahia's governor, who proposed expanding the program's English teaching as a way to promote opportunity in the region's rapidly growing tourism industry. The Secretary pledged support to the people of northeast Brazil, and Mission Brazil worked with officials in Washington and Brazil to deliver on the pledge.

Program Expands

The results came in August, when Director of Foreign Assistance and USAID Administrator Henrietta Fore visited Salvador and signed an agreement to expand Enter Jovem into Bahia's public school system, with a new English-language component. The U.S. government pledged \$500,000, and more than 20 private-sector



leaders announced their intent to contribute.

"These partnerships are living examples of a new era of development, an era of interdependence, where special emphasis will be placed on leveraging public-private partnerships to spur innovation and results," Fore said.

The embassy is working with nine other Brazilian state governors to replicate Enter Jovem, including its strong focus on English teaching.

Mission Brazil launched the CSR program in October 2006 and also created Mais Unidos—"more united" in Portuguese. The group's goal is to strengthen public-private alliances to enhance CSR investments and help them achieve Millennium Development Goals, eight development goals endorsed by 189 nations. The members of Mais Unidos, which now includes more than 60 American companies, meet monthly to explore cooperation and promote their CSR activities.

Historic Opportunity

Shortly after the group's creation, Columbia University professor of sustainable development Jeffrey Sachs urged Mais Unidos to focus on Brazil's poorest and take advantage of the "opportunity for all of you to play a role in [Brazil's] real and historic transformation."

American companies invest more than \$250 million per year in Brazil in areas such as education, health and the environment. Most of these companies also have extensive volunteer programs, engaging

approximately 155,000 people annually.

Mission Brazil expects Mais Unidos to soon release its first report on 2006-2007 CSR activities by U.S. companies in Brazil. The report will identify beneficiaries and state the results in the context of Millennium Development Goals. It will also analyze trends, challenges and areas for future investment.

"What began as a desire by corporate leaders to engage in philanthropy has evolved into something that makes good business sense," Fore told Mais Unidos. "I want to capitalize on the tremendous energy and enthusiasm in the development community."

The positive response to CSR in the business community has companies turning to Mission Brazil for technical assistance, such as guidance in selecting partner nongovernmental organizations and expertise in project evaluation and monitoring. Using these new channels of communication with the private sector, the mission is enhancing the image of U.S. business and maximizing U.S. assistance. ■

The author is the American presence officer for Belém in the public affairs section of the U.S. Embassy in Brasília.



Clockwise from top: Secretary of State Rice meets with members of Enter Jovem; Enter Jovem's computer training helps youths find jobs; the Bagunção Cultural Group performs for, from left, Governor of Bahia State Jaques Wagner, USAID Administrator Henrietta Fore and Brazilian and American officials.

Constant Change

MEETING THE CHALLENGES OF THE U.S. EMBASSY IN BAGHDAD

BY SABREEN RAHMAN

The U.S. Embassy in Baghdad is a place of contrasts and action. Busy diplomats and young Marines, rifles on their shoulders, walk the corridors of Saddam Hussein's former palace under crystal chandeliers. People swarm around tiny workstations set in the palace's opulent halls. Alongside military vehicles that look like a cross between tanks and trucks, embassy vehicles run in and out of the parking lot. Helicopters of every size and shape fly in and out.

One day you wake to distant car-bomb explosions in the Red Zone; the next, to the sound of cooing doves.

The U.S. Embassy in Baghdad is anything but a "normal" embassy, as I found during my recent tour.

Besides diplomats and Locally Employed staff, the embassy employs fixed-term contractual diplomats, Iraqi-Americans serving as bilingual bicultural advisers, a dwindling number of Iraqi LE staff, many Jordanians and Egyptians and a growing number of LE staff from around the world, including me.

I volunteered for Baghdad from my post in Bangladesh in November 2007. Most volunteers say they volunteered to contribute

to the U.S. government effort in Iraq. My reasons were less altruistic. I wanted to observe history in the making, up close in the post-Saddam era, and be part of it.

Cultural Challenges

I joined my team of co-workers at the cultural affairs office of the public affairs section and worked in a very multicultural environment. My co-workers were from Africa, Europe, South America and the Middle East. Of course each of us viewed situations through our own cultural lenses. Sometimes, body language and attitudes and expressions contributed to communication gaps between co-workers. At other posts, the LES are often a homogeneous group, but at Baghdad this is not the case.

I managed local grants issued by the cultural affairs office to Iraqi recipients, most of them public diplomacy grants that contributed to engagement with women's empowerment groups. It was heartening to see women's groups active in various sectors such as education and rehabilitation. The PAS often sought out such

A beautiful sunset near Baghdad illustrates the contrasts that currently exist in the city.



PHOTOGRAPHS: (LEFT) CORBIS; (OPPOSITE PAGE) U.S. EMBASSY IN BAGHDAD

groups and worked to support efforts that engaged women and youth.

I also helped with events hosted by Ambassador Ryan Crocker for Iraqi alumni and contacts. It was a challenge for Iraqis to come to the International Zone to attend the Ambassador's receptions, but most alumni and PAS contacts appreciated the opportunity to meet him.

One of the biggest challenges of working with Iraqis was the language barrier. Not everyone spoke English well, and we needed constant help.

The "Green Room" of Baghdad's PAS is home to the press section and to military units of the Provincial Reconstruction Team, and it pulses with energy like a campaign headquarters on election night. This sense of urgency, of around-the-clock operation, is endlessly stressful. People become territorial about their work and fiercely compete to establish their ground. The FSOs try to keep everyone on track.

The embassy is like a train station, and the staffing pattern operates like Russian roulette in that people are always leaving. Theoretically, continuity is to be maintained in all spheres of work, but on a practical level, this is difficult: The constant employee turnover leads to unavoidable losses.

Another problem is the "fish bowl" environment, which contributes to some people's short fuses. Day in and day out, employees see the same faces, deal with the same issues and undercurrents, and have the same places to hang out. Thus, they suffer from lack of mental and physical space. True, the post has recreation facilities, and there are exercise classes, dance classes, Karaoke nights, bars and, of course, food—plenty of food to eat one's loneliness away.

Ways to Cope

People find their own ways to cope with homesickness and loneliness. KBR Inc., the contractor formerly known as Kellogg Brown & Root, provides plenty of food for everyone in the IZ. KBR subcontracts to catering companies in the Middle East that hire people from developing countries. I was happy to find Bangladeshi bearers and cleaners in the dining facilities. They worked hard and never complained.

Another problem was that most employees lived in spartan trailers before the new embassy compound opened in May.

We had our scares. People raced to bunkers or jumped from bed whenever the alarms signaled incoming rocket or mortar fire, but we got used to the intermittent episodes of shelling and bombing in the IZ. A real taste of war came in March, when the IZ was under constant mortar and shell attack. The casualties, death and destruction shook our bubble-like existence, and the staff took refuge in Saddam's former palace, where we worked, ate and slept in the office spaces and corridors.

Tour Ends

Ambassador Ryan Crocker did all he could to take care of us, and we tried to keep our spirits up and support each other, but the constant threat challenged all of us. We worked as if our lives depended on it.



Above: The author with then-Commanding General Multi-National Force-Iraq General David Petraeus. **Below:** At her workstation in the embassy.



People always ask me, "How was Iraq?" and I find myself at a loss for words. It was an unusual experience. As happens with most volunteers, my ties with my loved ones were tested by the distance and danger. In sum, the tour challenged me intellectually, physically, emotionally and spiritually. ■

The author is a cultural affairs specialist at the American Center of the U.S. Embassy in Dhaka, Bangladesh.



Candid Cameras

MISSION MEXICO CAPTURES A DAY IN ITS LIFE

BY MATTHEW A. MYERS AND LESLIE BASSETT

A snapshot of a day in the life of Mission Mexico—its people, the embassy and all nine U.S. consulates—would take thousands of photos. But this is just what Mission Mexico recently accomplished: a day-in-the-life project that in book form—and eventually online—depicts the events of an average day across the mission's many operations.

The project was a team effort. Ed Ramotowski, consul general in Guadalajara, secured a donation from Kodak de Mexico of 200 disposable cameras, which were distributed to volunteers across the mission. John Dinkelman, principal officer in Nogales, helped gain a grant from the Una Chapman Cox Foundation to support the project's organizational, layout and printing costs. Karen Martin, principal officer in Merida, identified a talented eligible family member, Dan Taylor, who agreed to lay out a book featuring photos

that captured the breadth of mission activities.

With the support of regional security officers, information officers and 350 eager volunteers, the photography got under way.

Over several days in February, mission community members—including family, local guards, contractors, Locally Employed staff and direct hires from all mission agencies—snapped away. They took photos of visa lines, cafeteria staff, U.S. government planes awaiting take-off, maintenance staff checking warehouse inventories, the mailroom team hauling pouch bags and the Foreign Commercial Service promoting U.S. companies.

There were also photos of employees beginning their commutes, local guards checking the gate, staff members typing, children on the school bus, staff playing after-hours soccer and an awards ceremony or two.



Pitching In

In Merida, a visa applicant photographed every step of his interview process. There were aerial photos from Tijuana of the U.S.-Mexico border, taken during a Customs and Border Patrol ride-along, and from Merida of famous Mayan archaeological sites.

As part of the project, every post in Mexico was asked to take a “family photo,” and add a little local flavor to the shot. The U.S. Embassy in Mexico City provided a wide-angle shot of about 400 of its 800 staff members. In Nuevo Laredo, the consulate general’s staff wore cowboy hats. In Monterrey, employees spelled out the post’s name by positioning their arms and legs to make the letters. The staff in Ciudad Juarez used software to place its group photo under the archway of one of the main border crossings between the United States and Mexico.

With the help of entry-level coordinators and information specialists at the mission’s nine consulates and a large embassy team led by Eva Sibaja, the project team uploaded more than 10,000 photos into a shared network site. Then the hard work began, as the team culled through large files of wonderful pictures to select the few that could be included in the day-in-the-life book, capturing the broad range of mission activities.

Project Editor Dan Taylor spent months poring over the photos, selecting the right ones for each topic area. The team realized a narrative would be required to put the photos in context. Jeff Adler, vice consul in Merida, and Matthew Myers, a consular officer in Ciudad Juarez, took the lead in crafting the words to go along with the photos. Taylor then went through four more edits of the book before he was finally satisfied.

Teamwork

The chosen photos highlighted the mission’s nonimmigrant and immigrant visa work and American citizen services work. They also depicted methamphetamine lab seizures undertaken by Mexican law enforcement officers who had been trained by their American colleagues. They captured the mission’s efforts to promote U.S. investment and agricultural trade, stop trafficking in persons and preserve the environment. Finally, they caught vividly how the mission team keeps buildings operational, information flowing, facilities secure and its communities safe and happy. From morning to night, the photos show Mission Mexico working as a team.

The project team posted each edit of the book on Mission Mexico’s blog and received rave reviews from participants, although some were disappointed that their photos weren’t selected.

Thanks to funding from the Una Chapman Cox Foundation, the mission will publish 1,000 copies of an 84-page photo book, which will go to diplomats in residence, State Department offices, political advisers, interagency colleagues and the National War College. They will also be used to explain how the Foreign Service promotes U.S. interests and to recruit new members. A Web version will be posted on the mission’s Internet sites.

The Mission Mexico blog at www.intelink.gov/communities/state/mexico details how the project was organized, and the Web site <http://mexico.usembassy.gov/dayinthelife> has the book. In all, the project was a fairly low-cost effort with terrific payoff in morale and public diplomacy benefits. ■

Matthew Myers is a consular officer at the U.S. Consulate General in Ciudad Juarez, and Leslie Bassett is the deputy chief of mission at the U.S. Embassy in Mexico City.





Dial 7-2000

DEPARTMENT CONSOLIDATES INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY HELP DESKS
BY CRISTINA LISA PEREZ

Any domestic employee of the Department of State who uses a computer will soon see a change in the way he or she receives desktop support. The Department is shifting from a decentralized support system of bureau-based help desks to a centralized system, with support provided by the Bureau of Information Resource Management.

“State Department employees should always be able to think of technology and information as tools to help them conduct diplomacy and realize their operational goals, not as challenges that

make their jobs more difficult,” said Chief Information Officer Susan Swart.

The IT Consolidation Program, to be completed next year, brings the Department’s information technology desktop support under one umbrella to improve customer service, enhance security and contain costs.

At its core, IT consolidation is all about service. Providing the service from a single source will standardize and normalize technical support and provide a better means of measuring performance.

Customers should receive better service, and they will receive standardized services regardless of their physical location or bureau affiliation. Because the centralized help desk will have access to the Department’s complete technical knowledge base, customers’ most complex issues will be resolved. Customers will also have access to the IT Service Center staff 24 hours a day, seven days a week.

The center’s technical support staff will work side-by-side with their other IT counterparts. For IT staff, the key



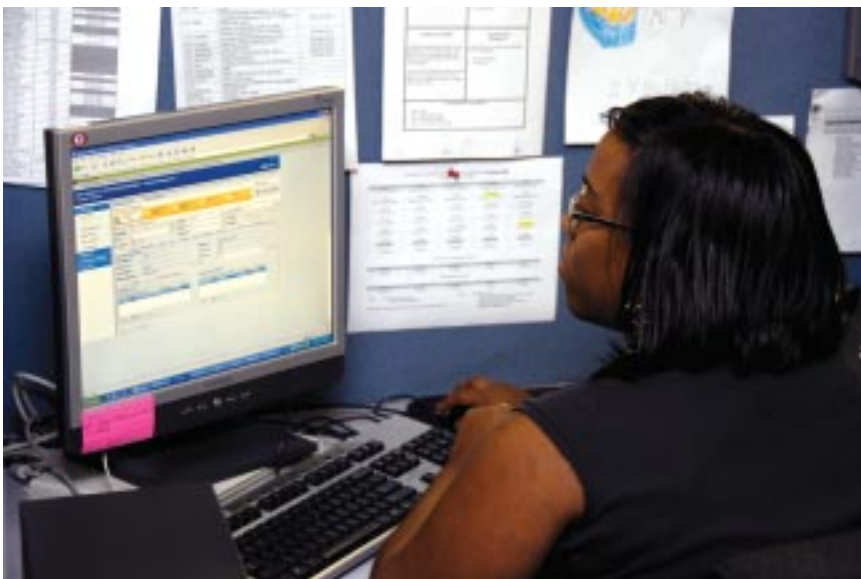
benefits of working in such a large IT community are greater opportunities for career advancement and job training.

High-level Service

To ensure that customers consistently receive high levels of service, IRM wants to gain customer feedback and incorporate it into how the help desk provides support. Customers will be able to provide feedback with each help desk call, and IRM's quarterly customer survey will report how IRM can improve support and overall performance.

IT consolidation is an established industry practice. As public and private organizations sought to improve IT service while minimizing costs, many capitalized on the benefits of IT consolidation, including increased efficiency, improved customer service and bolstered organizational security due to the common operating

Right: Ronnie Hartwell and Alicia Truesdale work together to solve a customer's problem.
Bottom: Tonee Winborne uses Remedy to perform her customer service duties.



environment. While there are still challenges ahead, the Department has established a foundation to sustain operational process improvement.

Many of these benefits stem from the fact that one group—in this case, IRM—has assumed responsibility for supporting all desktop computers. The Department has set customer service standards and will monitor those standards through IRM's Department-wide metrics. These standards are based on the best expectations in the industry.

Finally, consolidation simplifies the service process for customers by giving them just one number to call when they need help: 7-2000.

In October, about half of the Department's 34 bureaus were being supported by the IT Service Center. As the program moves toward the finish line, it will continue seeking customer input. More information is on the IT consolidation Intranet Web site at <http://itconsolidation.a.state.gov>. ■

The author is a budget and finance coordinator in IRM.

Belfast

U.S. helps forge peace in Northern Ireland

By Michael Brakke and Susan Elliott

A sunny day brings people to the green around Belfast City Hall.

post of the month



For many Americans, Northern Ireland evokes images of sectarian violence. For decades, the region was torn by civil strife, the legacy of which time has not fully erased. But years of uncertainty have been replaced by a new climate of peace, economic prosperity and optimism.

The connections between Northern Ireland, the United Kingdom and the United States have always been strong. The U.S. Consulate General in Belfast, America's second-oldest continuously operating consulate, has reflected since its opening in 1796 the depth and permanence of a relationship forged by immigration, trade and cultural affiliation.

In its early days, the consulate existed primarily to safeguard the interests of U.S. citizens and foster transatlantic commerce. America's capitalists and consumers were eager to access Belfast's flourishing textile and manufacturing industries. The city was known for its shipbuilding prowess and eventually gained notoriety as the birthplace of the *Titanic*. "It was fine when it left here," locals point out. Enhancing economic ties remains a core mission of the consulate.

Northern Ireland played an important role during World War II. Aware of the city's prodigious output of essential war implements, the Nazis unleashed a punishing bombing campaign on Belfast. The first U.S. troops sent to Europe landed in Northern Ireland, and the Supreme Commander of

Allied Forces, General Dwight Eisenhower, frequently visited the province.

"The Troubles"

Since Northern Ireland's earliest days, Catholics and Protestants, suspicious of each other's motives, have been at the root of Northern Ireland's divide. Yet the conflict never fit into the simple rubric of religious intolerance. Instead, faith traditions became a proxy for fundamental differences in political ideology, allegiance or treatment.

At the most basic level, "unionists" or "loyalists" want Northern Ireland to continue to be a part of the United Kingdom, while "nationalists" or "republicans" espouse Ireland's unification into one republic. For various reasons, the former tend to be Protestant and the latter Catholic.

In the 1960s, civil rights movements developed in Northern Ireland and many groups decided to resist. The conflict soon escalated into a cycle of deadly retribution colloquially known as The Troubles. By the 1990s, The Troubles had claimed approximately 3,500 lives.

In 1995, President Bill Clinton made a historic visit to Northern Ireland, the first by a sitting president. He was greeted by tens of thousands of people lining the streets and waving American flags. As he lit Belfast's Christmas tree, partisans from all sides seemed inspired that a different Northern Ireland was possible.

Belfast is a kaleidoscope of color at night.



PHOTOGRAPHS: U.S. CONSULATE GENERAL IN BELFAST





Below: Standing 113 feet tall, the Albert Clock in central Belfast is built on wooden piles on reclaimed land and is known as Belfast's "Leaning Tower of Pisa." The top leans four feet off the perpendicular.



Left: Consul General Susan Elliott and her family cross the Carrick-A-Rede rope bridge on Northern Ireland's picturesque North Antrim coast. Spanning a deep chasm, the swinging bridge was built by salmon fishermen. **Right:** President and Mrs. Bush meet students of Loughview Integrated School in Belfast during their June visit. Such schools bring Catholics, Protestants and children of other faiths together in an environment where they can learn to understand and respect their differences.



Good Friday

That same year, former Senate Majority Leader George Mitchell was appointed the first special envoy on Northern Ireland. Throughout his tenure, the consulate supported him in navigating the political forces of a fragile province. Mitchell's persistence culminated in the lauded Belfast Good Friday Agreement of 1998. The agreement represented an unparalleled advance in Northern Ireland affairs but did not immediately solve Northern Ireland's problems. Disputes quickly led to renewed uncertainty about its practical significance.

In 2006, the St. Andrew's Agreement addressed many of the outstanding issues. On May 8, 2007, historical adversaries Martin McGuinness of Sinn Féin and Ian Paisley of the Democratic Unionist Party came together to celebrate the formation of a new government. Standing by their side were the leaders of a presidential delegation sent to witness this historic event, U.S. Senator Edward Kennedy and Under Secretary for Democracy and Global Affairs Paula Dobriansky, who was appointed as Special Envoy on Northern Ireland in February 2007.

Because of the influence of its Irish immigrant communities, the United States has always had a multidimensional attitude toward Irish

independence. The more than 40 million Irish-Americans retain exceptional nostalgia for their ancestral homeland. Some, invoking colonial America's struggle against the British, have supported the unification of Ireland.

At the same time, the United States' close bonds with the United Kingdom and the appreciable influence of its Ulster Scot (Scots Irish) population mean that U.S. opinion on Ireland is not monolithic. Hence, the consulate in Belfast hasn't engaged in contentious debates about Northern Ireland's constitutional status. Instead, the United States has fostered close relationships with both the London and Dublin governments while respecting their divergent visions of Ulster's future.

Strong Bonds

Providing services to American citizens will always be the consulate's first priority, but promoting bilateral ties is important, too. The consular section issues many visas to young adults participating in educational exchanges or pursuing higher education in the United States. In one program, the consulate helps the Irish Institute at Boston College choose students, academics, politicians and community leaders to come to the United States to learn about the similarities and differences between the United States and Northern Ireland.



PHOTOGRAPHS: U.S. CONSULATE GENERAL IN BELFAST





Left: Danesfort House, home of the U.S. Consulate since 2004, looks serene after a snowfall. It was built in the 19th century for a local linen magnate. **Below:** Deputy Chief of Mission Richard LeBaron, left, and Consul General Susan Elliott get a tour of the former Crumlin Road Prison and Girdwood Army Barracks in North Belfast from Tim Losty. The site is now a major community regeneration project.



Left: The Giants Causeway in County Antrim has about 38,000 basalt columns created by a volcanic eruption. This World Heritage Site is Northern Ireland's most popular tourist attraction. **Right:** Former U.S. Poet Laureate Billy Collins, left, poses with Management Officer Prasenjit Gupta at the John Hewitt International Poetry Summer School in July. The event received a grant from the Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs.





Above: Stormont, Northern Ireland's Parliament buildings, built in 1922, are six miles east of central Belfast. **Right:** Torr Head on the Antrim coast is where the Irish Sea meets the North Atlantic.



PHOTOGRAPHS: U.S. CONSULATE GENERAL IN BELFAST

Public affairs section Locally Employed staffer Peter McKittrick, center, hikes with friends in the Mourne, a mountain range in southeastern Northern Ireland's County Down.



Another example of the strong bonds between America and Ulster is the sisters cities relationship between Belfast and Nashville, Tenn. The consulate has assisted in visits to Northern Ireland by Nashville's mayor. In July, Belfast will be the first city outside the United States to host the Sister Cities Annual International Conference, which attracts more than 3,000 participants worldwide.

The consulate staff works with Northern Ireland's political, business and community leaders to promote change and growth. Special Envoy Dobriansky, U.S. Ambassador to the United Kingdom Robert Tuttle and Consul General Susan Elliott have guided the consulate in pursuit of three broad diplomatic objectives designed to secure the peace process and promote U.S. interests: supporting a more stable government, promoting a pluralistic society and developing a strong entrepreneurial economy.

Consulate staff participated in the planning and implementation of a successful investment conference in Belfast

in May. U.K. Prime Minister Gordon Brown, Ireland's head of government Brian Cowen, New York Mayor Michael Bloomberg and other dignitaries joined potential investors to explore Northern Ireland's business climate and investment potential.

President and Mrs. Bush visited Belfast in June. One of the highlights of their trip was a visit to an integrated school. Since approximately 95 percent of Northern Ireland's children attend schools divided along religious lines, support for integrated education is essential to breaking down sectarian divides and developing new, healthy community relations.

Northern Ireland is one of America's most significant and bipartisan foreign policy success stories. Today, the consulate's four officers and dedicated local staff strive to help the region overcome its divisive history in favor of a shared, more prosperous future. ■

Michael Brakke was a 2008 summer intern at the U.S. Consulate General in Belfast. Susan Elliott is the consul general.

At a Glance



Country The United Kingdom of Great Britain and Ireland

Capital London

Total area 244,820 sq km

Approximate size Slightly smaller than Oregon

Government type Constitutional monarchy

Life expectancy 78.85 years

Population 60.94 million

Languages English, Welsh and Scottish form of Gaelic

Currency British pound (GBP)

Per capita income \$35,100

Import partners Germany (13.7 percent), United States (8.3 percent) and Netherlands (7.2 percent)

Export partners United States (14.1 percent), Germany (11 percent) and France (7.8 percent)

Internet country code .uk



From left, are EEB's Principal Deputy Assistant Secretary David Nelson and EEB staffers Nicholle Manz, Lillian Wasvary and Danielle Monosson. Manz and Monosson are economic cone officers.

Evolving Role

ECONOMIC OFFICERS ADAPT AS FOREIGN POLICY CHANGES
BY VIKTOR SIDABRAS

As U.S. foreign policy has adjusted to the accelerating pace of technological advancement and globalization, the shock of the 9/11 attacks and the renewed importance of energy security and climate change, the Department's economic cone officers have continually adapted, changing their approach and how they make decisions.

Yet, despite new tools, priorities and policy goals, the mission of the economic cone remains "to promote economic security and prosperity at home and abroad," said Daniel S. Sullivan, assistant secretary for Economic, Energy and Business Affairs.

Whether working at the computer terminal, conferring with counterparts in foreign capitals or participating in interagency meetings in Washington,

today's economic officers know their information is part of a common pool of data accessible worldwide and updated around the clock.

"The worldwide proliferation of the Internet and other communications technologies provided economic officers with new tools for policy advocacy and transformed the way they work," said David Nelson, principal deputy assistant secretary of the Bureau of Economic, Energy and Business Affairs.

While economic officers once primarily filled in knowledge gaps and did research and reporting, now they increasingly seek out the needed data, such as that crucial to clinching a trade deal, influencing policy and legislation or explaining the U.S. posi-

tion to skeptical publics. An added benefit of their expanded role is that, thanks to e-mail and digital video teleconferences, communication between Washington and overseas has itself expanded and can often occur in real time. Because information is not always reliable, economic officers face challenges when sharing information to advance U.S. interests with their host-nation contacts.

One World

Global integration is essentially an economic phenomenon, and it offers economic officers greater opportunity to advance policies, in coordination with other key institutional partners, that support the positive aspects of

globalization. For example, thanks to a tremendous increase in the flow of cross-border, foreign direct investment, the total value of foreign-owned assets in the United States nearly tripled in 10 years, rising from almost \$600 billion in 1996 to almost \$1.8 trillion in 2006. At the same time, the value of assets abroad owned by Americans rose from almost \$800 billion to almost \$2.4 trillion. This rapid expansion of international investment has provided opportunities for U.S. business overseas and jobs for Americans at home.

Economic officers have promoted this beneficial integration by promoting the expansion of free trade agreements, bilateral investment treaties and air services agreements worldwide to protect U.S. investments. They also lead U.S. efforts to promote global Internet and cell phone connectivity, which will encourage economic growth and the free flow of information.

Additionally, their participation in the interagency Committee on Foreign Investment in the United States helps ensure an open climate for foreign investment in the United States and for U.S. investment abroad.

As part of the Transformational Diplomacy initiative, many economic officer positions have been reprogrammed from Western Europe and Washington, D.C., to important developing countries, including China, India, Brazil, Russia, South Africa and other nations. Economic officers also play a central role in coordinating with the global donor community to ensure the maximum impact of scarce funds.

Fighting Terror

The 9/11 attacks emphasized the nexus between economic prosperity and national security. Economic officers have addressed the challenges posed by security threats by taking key leadership roles in the interagency effort to combat terrorist financing and protect U.S. borders.

"A big change in the post-9/11 environment for economic officers is the increased need for coalition-building with our partners and for reaching out to stakeholders on trade and other issues," said Amy Holman, deputy director of EEB's Office of Bilateral Trade.

Now, economic officers take the lead in building international coalitions to deny terrorists and their supporters access to the global financial system, strengthen multilateral initiatives and assist countries that have vulnerable financial systems. In addition, economic officers perform the lead interagency work on international outreach and coordination regarding maritime and aviation security.

An example of how the post-9/11 world affected economic officers was offered by John N. Ries, economic section chief at the U.S. Embassy in Port of Spain, Trinidad and Tobago. "When I served in the Office of Bilateral Trade in 1999-2001, I covered trade with all developing countries in Asia with the exception of China," said Ries, a veteran of 18 years as an economic officer. "After 9/11, I understand that office had one or more people working full time on

Pakistan and Afghanistan, countries barely on the radar screen during my watch."

The Secretary of State's 2007 decision to include "energy" in the name of EEB, the home bureau of economic officers, underscores the importance of energy security, especially with the dramatic rise in oil prices and the use of oil as a political lever by some key producers. Implementing energy legislation passed by the Congress, the Secretary designated Under Secretary for Economic, Energy and Agricultural Affairs Reuben Jeffery III as the Department's coordinator for International Energy Affairs. A number of senior officials focus on energy security under the coordinator's direction.

Hot Topic

"Energy as an issue used to blow hot when prices were high and would go cold when prices fell," economic officer Ries said. "Now, the prospect is for energy to stay a high priority, and everyone needs some level of familiarity with energy issues."

Economic officers also now focus on developing transparent global energy markets that offer open access to suppliers and encouraging key producers to increase their investment in energy production. They also helped lead the effort to obtain the Group of Eight's endorsement of the President's Climate Change/Energy Security initiative.

The increasing importance of the work of economic officers is reflected by increased demand for them. To compensate for earlier shortages, the number of Foreign Service economic officers grew 12 percent from September 30, 2003, through July 31, 2008.

The talented women and men of the economic cone are ready to meet the rising demands placed upon them as they contribute to the creation of a diplomatic service for the 21st century. ■

The author is a public affairs adviser in EEB's Office of Economic Policy Analysis and Public Diplomacy. This is the first in an occasional series of State Magazine stories on how the career cones are changing. Future stories will look at public diplomacy, political and other cones.



Having a chat at a reception hosted by the International Labor Organization's Caribbean office are, from left, Stephanie Hutchison and Ellen Wong, both economic officers, and John Ries, economic section chief at the U.S. Embassy in Port of Spain.



Gathered at OFM's office in the Harry S Truman Building are, from left, Kim McMahon-Carter, Irina Kolb and Cliff Seagroves.

FAIR PLAY

Smart new diplomatic license plates are popping up on the roads in Washington, D.C., and across the United States, the product of the first new diplomatic license plate redesign since diplomatic plates were first issued in the United States in 1984.

These distinctive light blue and red plates were designed by the State Department's Office of Foreign Missions for the thousands of foreign diplomats living in the United States.

Administering license plates for foreign diplomats, however, is not the central function of OFM. Created in 1982, OFM has perhaps the most unusual mission in the Department.

Administering the Department's version of the "golden rule" through the practice of

reciprocity helps improve the lives of Foreign Service officers abroad, enhance Department operations worldwide and protect the interests of U.S. communities and their citizens.

Congressional Mandate

Before 1982, the Department had limited legal authority to impose restrictions on a foreign mission, in spite of the sometimes severe restrictions that nations might impose on U.S. missions abroad. To resolve this disparity, Congress that year passed the Foreign Missions Act, giving the Department authority to more effectively regulate foreign missions in the United States. The act established OFM to determine foreign missions' privileges and

immunities, based on reciprocity and national security needs.

"The Foreign Missions Act has helped far beyond its original intention," said Assistant Secretary for Diplomatic Security and Director for the Office of Foreign Missions Eric J. Boswell. "OFM has become a critical tool for the conduct of American diplomacy."

OFM's mission has expanded to include a broader range of foreign policy issues. The office helps bring the interests of U.S. diplomats abroad, U.S. communities and Department legal and financial considerations into the decision-making process regarding the operation of foreign missions in the United States.

OFM also helps improve the benefits

OFFICE ASSISTS FOREIGN MISSIONS ON U.S. SOIL
BY ROB BARTON AND BRIAN LEVENTHAL

available to American diplomats and their families overseas through the use of reciprocity. A nation sometimes restricts the tax, customs, driving and travel privileges of U.S. diplomats. By applying equivalent restrictions to that nation's diplomats in the United States, OFM provides incentives for the foreign government to reverse these practices.

For example, OFM often uses its control over individual tax exemption to match the tax privileges available to an American diplomat. Sometimes, that can mean providing another nation's diplomats with no tax exemptions, or no exemption for certain types of purchases or requiring a minimum dollar amount before an exemption applies.

Customs Reciprocity

OFM's control over customs issues also aids U.S. diplomats overseas. The office provides the Department's concurrence on the importation of shipments to foreign missions or their members in the United States. OFM uses reciprocity in approving, rejecting or delaying such shipments.

"When the hassles of getting tax relief or getting household effects released or

obtaining a license plate begin to affect post morale, it helps that our staff knows OFM is there and ready to equalize treatment," said Carol Urban, deputy chief of mission at the U.S. Embassy in Santiago, Chile.

"She calls OFM "a major source of information and expertise on a variety of issues affecting daily operation of our embassies and the lives and morale of our employees."

Using reciprocity, OFM also helps obtain better terms for Department property acquisitions abroad and tax exemptions, which have saved the Department tens of millions of dollars.

The Foreign Missions Act gives OFM the authority to disapprove foreign missions' real estate acquisitions in the United States for reciprocity or security reasons and gives the Bureau of Overseas Buildings Operations leverage in real estate negotiations abroad.

"OFM has aided OBO in obtaining relief from value-added taxes on property and buildings acquisitions overseas, which has extended the buying power of the funds appropriated for this purpose," OBO Director Richard Shinnick said.

He said construction of the new U.S. Embassy in Beijing, recently dedicated by

At a Glance

Office name

Office of Foreign Missions

Symbol

DS/OFM

Office director

Ambassador Eric J. Boswell

Staff size

83

Office location

Main State, Room 2236

Web site

www.state.gov/ofm



Members of OFM's staff include, from left, Myrna Adlena, Victorio Flores and Kiona Johnson.



Above: Members of OFM's Diplomatic Motor Vehicle Office, tax and customs operation, are from left, Dean Olsen, LaVerne Minter, Jacqueline V. Norris and Gerry Maynard. **Below:** Rob Barton is the acting deputy assistant secretary in charge of OFM.

President Bush, was possible only because of the successful negotiation, led by an OFM negotiator, of a Conditions of Construction Agreement with the Chinese.

Protecting Property

When the United States ends diplomatic

relations with a nation, OFM carries out the Department's obligation to protect the foreign governments' diplomatic property. Over the years the office has had custody of properties belonging to the governments of Cambodia, Iran, Iraq, Somalia, Vietnam and the former Yugoslavia. Its care of these

properties benefited the Department when relations were restored.

Finally, OFM's control over foreign and domestic tax matters is an important financial asset for the Department. One achievement in this area has been the Diplomatic Tax-Relief Initiative.

Through this program, OFM helped create more than 40 bilateral tax-relief arrangements, which provided reciprocal tax relief for the construction and renovation of diplomatic facilities abroad and in the United States. These arrangements will yield an estimated savings of roughly \$300 million, the cost of two large embassies.

OFM protects the interests of U.S. communities by advising their governments and citizens on the privileges and immunities provided to foreign diplomats in their communities. When a locality inquires about a poorly maintained embassy building or what hotel exemptions should be granted to foreign missions, OFM provides guidance and coordination.

Registering Vehicles

OFM also protects localities' interests by overseeing diplomatic motor vehicle use in





the United States. The Foreign Missions Act gives OFM the authority to control the acquisition and operation of motor vehicles by foreign missions. OFM can enforce compliance with U.S. parking and traffic laws, which foreign mission personnel must respect under the Vienna Conventions. OFM issues drivers' licenses and vehicle registrations, and can revoke or suspend driving privileges. It also ensures that all foreign mission personnel carry sufficient vehicle insurance.

Besides serving the foreign embassies in Washington, D.C., OFM serves 543 consular posts throughout the United States and its territories and 190 missions to the United Nations. OFM has six regional offices, located in Chicago, Houston, Los Angeles, Miami, New York and San Francisco.

Since 1982, OFM has evolved and matured, gaining wide expertise on foreign governmental matters. Today, OFM is involved in a range of Department issues and participates in some of the Department's most vital negotiations. ■

Rob Barton is acting deputy assistant secretary in OFM, and Brian Leventhal is the deputy director for Public Affairs in the Bureau of Diplomatic Security.

Above: Bill Ellis, right, a foreign missions program specialist, works with a customer at OFM's customer service center. **Below:** Joan Morningstar, acting director of OFM's motor vehicles office, stands with system engineer Ed Zietoon.







Traveling Well

GOING OVERSEAS? CHRONIC MEDICAL CONDITIONS REQUIRE PLANNING **BY MARI C. SULLIVAN**

A mentor, Dr. Elaine Jong, once told me, “We are given the body we are given, and it is up to us to make the most of it.” It is essential that we allow ourselves to live at our highest physical and mental health potential.

Many in the Foreign Service have chronic medical problems that we manage while living overseas in unfamiliar environments. Life overseas can be rewarding, exciting and enjoyable if we remain healthy, even if one has asthma, diabetes, hypertension, heart disease, HIV, cancer or a mental health condition.

Many people with chronic medical conditions have a Class 2 medical clearance, which requires a post-specific clearance based on local availability of medical care for the condition. Therefore, one must obtain post approval before bidding on overseas posts. Medical Clearances will need a current report regarding your medical condition. You should make an appointment with your physician two months before the bidding season and ask for a medical report summarizing your medical status and receive the required follow-up for the next two years. Submit this report to Medical Clearances and bring a copy to post for your health provider.

Anyone with a chronic health issue should be prepared for overseas travel. You need to consider access to medical care, increased oxygen demands of aerobic exercise, changes in diet, the effects of altitude, and the

effects of humidity and heat. Discuss your condition with your U.S. specialist or healthcare provider prior to travel and contact him or her by telephone or e-mail if you have health questions or problems while overseas.

Check in with the post health unit upon arrival overseas. If your post does not have a medical officer, inform the regional medical officer about your condition. This gives you and the RMO or Foreign Service health practitioner the opportunity to discuss your condition and ensure optimal care is available. The medical staff will be aware of the medical resources throughout the region and can suggest places you could go for treatment, if necessary.

You should also tell the Office of Medical Services and your healthcare provider about any changes in your condition, to ensure medical access at onward assignments.

Bring at least a three-month supply of any daily medications in your carry-on luggage. Make yourself aware of the prescription benefits available to you through the Federal Employees Health Benefits program. Most insurers have a mail-in pharmacy that will provide a three-month supply of a prescription drug for minimal co-pay. Some insurers will allow a one-year supply of medications for those with a chronic medical issue who are stationed overseas. Consult your insurance brochure, available online, for infor-

mation regarding your FEHB prescription policy.

People with diabetes should have enough supplies to get them through the first four to six months at post. The mail-in pharmacies will not ship temperature-sensitive medications overseas, so have your insulin delivered to you before you leave for post. Plan to pick up your refill during an R&R trip, or arrange for someone to bring the insulin to you.

Specific conditions, such as asthma or chronic obstructive pulmonary disease, may require a different approach overseas; and environmental conditions at post, such as poor air quality, may exacerbate a condition. Bring a peak-flow meter to post so you can monitor your progress at home. Also ask for a management plan from your U.S.-based healthcare provider, RMO or FSHP if the peak-flow numbers indicate you are encountering increased problems with your asthma.

Those with chronic medical issues can, with planning, enjoy a full and rewarding career in the Foreign Service. Here's to safe and healthy travels wherever you may go. ■

The author is a Foreign Service health practitioner at the U.S. Embassy in Kuala Lumpur. She is the author of the chapter “Travel with Chronic Medical Conditions” in The Travel and Tropical Medicine Manual, 3rd and 4th editions.



Learn

FSI Web Page

Find everything you need to know about FSI and its training opportunities at <http://fsi.state.gov>. This site is constantly updated to give you just-in-time information on services such as:

- Online Catalog: Up-to-the-minute course schedules and offerings from live classroom training to distance learning.
- Online Registration System: Submit your training application for classroom, distance learning and even External Training, using the online registration link found on virtually every course description or the External Training Web page.
- Training Continua: Roadmaps to help you effectively plan your training for the year or beyond.
- About FSI: Get a snapshot view of FSI's history and enrollment statistics.
- Links to training resources: View information on specific countries, language learning and testing, and a myriad helpful reference materials.

Student Records Online

Located on the FSI Web page, Student Records Online is a secure, password-protected site that provides access to all FSI training information. Features include:

- Reviewing and printing your training schedule.
- Reviewing and printing your student transcript.
- Tracking the status of your training request.
- Canceling an already-scheduled FSI course.
- Requesting changes or canceling an external training registration.
- Creating and submitting your Individual Development Plan/Work and Development Plan for Locally Employed Staff.
- Retrieving your FasTrac password.

For more information and to establish your logon, visit the Web site at <http://fsiapps.fsi.state.gov/fsirecs/Login.aspx>.

FasTrac Distance Learning Program

Learn at your own pace, when and where you want! All State Department employees, FSNs and EFM's are eligible. With your FasTrac password, you may access the entire FasTrac catalog of more than 2,500 courses, from home or office. To view the complete FasTrac catalog, visit the FasTrac Web site at <http://fsi.state.gov/fastrac>.

For more information on all distance learning opportunities, visit the FSI Web site at <http://fsi.state.gov> and click on "Distance Learning."

ACE Credit

FSI participates in the American Council on Education's College Credit Recommendation Service. Several FSI courses and language proficiency tests have been designated for ACE Credit recommendation at either the undergraduate or graduate level. Students wishing to participate in this program must declare their intention of pursuing a Credit recommendation two weeks prior to course start-date. To obtain Credit recommendation, program participants will be required to successfully complete additional

Dates for FSI Transition Center Courses are shown below. For information on all the courses available at FSI, visit the Schedule of Courses on OpenNet at <http://fsi.state.gov>. See Department Notices for announcements of new courses and new course dates and periodic announcements of external training opportunities sponsored by FSI. For additional information, please contact the Office of the Registrar at (703) 302-7144/7137.

Security	Dec	Jan	Length
MQ911 Security Overseas Seminar	1, 15, 22	5, 26	2D
Foreign Service Life Skills	Dec	Jan	Length
MQ107 English Teaching Seminar	3		2D
MQ115 Explaining America		24	1D
MQ116 Protocol and the U.S. Representation Abroad	6	10	1D
MQ704 Targeting the Job Market		13	1D
MQ853 Managing Rental Property		28	2H
MQ950 High Stress Assignment Outbriefing Program	5	9	2H
Career Transition Center	Dec	Jan	Length
RV101 Retirement Planning Workshop	8		4D
RV103 Financial Management and Estate Planning	10		1D
RV104 Annuities and Benefits and Social Security	9		1D
RV105 Mid-Career Retirement Planning		28	2D

Length: H = Hours, D = Days, W = Weeks

coursework or achieve a specified final exam/test score. Students then apply to ACE to request an ACE transcript be forwarded to their college or university. More information can be obtained at <http://fsi.state.gov/admin/reg/print.asp?Heading=Accreditation/Certification>.

Introduction to Working in an Embassy

Newly updated, this course introduces employees of U.S. government agencies and their eligible family members to the structure and function of United States embassies and consulates overseas. It is designed to assist them in working successfully in a diplomatic environment. With MQ911 Security Overseas Seminar, this course fulfills the security requirement for individuals on a first-time overseas assignment lasting 30 days or more. It is not appropriate for Foreign Service Generalists or Specialists.

Ask FSI

Looking for information on a specific course, training location or distance learning? Experiencing a problem with registration, accessing a course or technical issue? "Ask FSI" is your answer. Found on the homepage of FSI (<http://fsi.state.gov>), Ask FSI allows you to review frequently asked questions or submit your own inquiry. Questions are routed quickly for prompt response.

Appointments



U.S. Ambassador to Senegal and Guinea-Bissau

Marcia Bernicat of New Jersey, a career member of the Senior Foreign Service, class of Minister-Counselor, is the new U.S. Ambassador to the Republic of Senegal and, concurrently, to the Republic of Guinea-Bissau. Previously, she was the Bureau of South and Central Asian Affairs' director for India, Nepal, Sri Lanka, Maldives and Bhutan. She has served in Barbados, Malawi, Morocco, India, France and Mali. She has two sons.



U.S. Ambassador to Qatar

Joseph E. LeBaron of Oregon, a career member of the Senior Foreign Service, class of Minister-Counselor, is the new U.S. Ambassador to the State of Qatar. Previously, he was ambassador to Mauritania. He has also served as deputy chief of mission in Manama and as consul general in Dubai. Other postings include Amman, Ankara and Istanbul. He is married and has a daughter.



U.S. Ambassador to Malawi

Peter William Bodde of Maryland, a career member of the Senior Foreign Service, class of Minister-Counselor, is the new U.S. Ambassador to the Republic of Malawi. Previously, he was deputy chief of mission in Islamabad. Before that, he was consul general in Frankfurt. His other assignments include Georgetown, Kathmandu, Hamburg, Sofia, Copenhagen and New Delhi.



U.S. Ambassador to Algeria

David D. Pearce of Virginia, a career member of the Senior Foreign Service, class of Minister-Counselor, is the new U.S. Ambassador to the People's Democratic Republic of Algeria. Previously, he was minister counselor for political affairs in Rome. While in Rome, he served two excursion tours to Iraq. He has served as chief of mission and consul general in Jerusalem. Other postings include Riyadh, Kuwait, Dubai and Damascus. He is married and has two children.



Assistant Secretary for Political-Military Affairs

Mark Kimmitt of Virginia, a former Army officer and Department of Defense official, is the new Assistant Secretary for Political-Military Affairs. Previously, he was deputy assistant secretary of Defense for Middle East policy. An Army officer for more than 30 years, he retired with the rank of brigadier general. His assignments included deputy director of operations and chief military spokesman for Coalition forces during Operation Iraqi Freedom.



U.S. Ambassador to Macedonia

Philip T. Reeker of the District of Columbia, a career member of the Senior Foreign Service, class of Counselor, is the new U.S. Ambassador to the Republic of Macedonia. Previously, he was counselor for public affairs in Iraq. Before that, he was deputy chief of mission in Budapest. He has been deputy spokesman and "spokesman at large" for the Department. His wife is also in the Foreign Service.



Appointments



U.S. Ambassador to Lebanon

Michele Jeanne Sison of Maryland, a career member of the Senior Foreign Service, class of Minister-Counselor, is the new U.S. Ambassador to the Republic of Lebanon. Previously, she was ambassador to the United Arab Emirates. Before that, she was principal deputy assistant secretary in the Bureau of South Asian Affairs. Her other postings include Islamabad, Chennai, Abidjan, Douala, Cotonou, Lome and Port-au-Prince. She has two daughters.



U.S. Ambassador to Cyprus

Frank C. Urbanic Jr. of Indiana, a career member of the Senior Foreign Service, class of Minister-Counselor, is the new U.S. Ambassador to the Republic of Cyprus. Previously, he was principal deputy assistant secretary and deputy to the coordinator in the Office of the Coordinator for Counterterrorism. Other postings include Kuwait, Istanbul, Abu Dhabi, Freetown, Doha, Quebec City, Amman, Tunis and Riyadh. He is married and has two children.



U.S. Ambassador to Rwanda

W. Stuart Symington of Missouri, a career member of the Senior Foreign Service, class of Counselor, is the new U.S. Ambassador to the Republic of Rwanda. Previously, he was ambassador to Djibouti. He served in Iraq, working on election process and political issues. Other postings include Honduras, Spain, Mexico, Ecuador and Niger, where he was deputy chief of mission.



U.S. Ambassador to Armenia

Marie L. Yovanovitch of Connecticut, a career member of the Senior Foreign Service, class of Minister-Counselor, is the new U.S. Ambassador to the Republic of Armenia. Previously, she was ambassador to the Kyrgyz Republic. Before that, she was senior advisor to the under secretary for political affairs. Her other postings include Kyiv, where she was deputy chief of mission; Ottawa; Moscow; London; and Mogadishu.

retirements

FOREIGN SERVICE

Bagchi, Plaban K.
Bennett, David R.
Colquhoun, Richard Andrew
Conlon, Margaret A.
Devlin, Joseph M.
Estes, Ellis Merrill
Gianfranceschi, Robert E.
Hofer, Curt
Jarrett, Kenneth Howard
Jones, Richard H.

Kelly, Thomas E.
Morales Colon, Hector E.
Nebel Jr., Claude J.
Rich III, Santiago
Rosenblatt, Josiah B.
Schuh, Thomas E.
Semmes III, Raphael
Smith, Stephen T.
Ward III, Francis B.
Yoas, Michael J.

CIVIL SERVICE

Beck, Nancy L.
Causey, Paula J.
Chen, Ying Chih
Drahos, Hazel E.
Fannin, Mary C.
Farrar Jr., John H.
Fitts, James Edward
Glasgow, Gloria J.
Hammontree, John L.
Hovey, Susan M.
Hunter, Donald R.

Keefer, Edward C.
Lassiter, Immy R.
Macon, George C.
Marino, Margot U.
Mozingo, Donald E.
Nelligan, Joanne
Patten, Patsy J.
Ponomaryova, Marina N.
Williams, Carnella
Wood, Rosetta R.



Helen K. Blair, 86, a retired Foreign Service specialist, died Aug. 17 in Waynesburg, Pa., following a long illness. She served overseas in England and Iran. After returning to Greene County, Pa., in 1963, she focused on investments and enjoyed her collections of Persian rugs, first-edition books and silverware.



Ruth Anne Rogers, 90, a retired Foreign Service officer, died Aug. 30. She had lived in Fort Myers, Fla., since her retirement in 1973. She sponsored children through World Vision and traveled to the Dominican Republic when she was 89 to meet one of them. She was active in her community and church.

Robert M. Forcey, 90, a retired Foreign Service officer, died Sept. 7 from pneumonia in Washington, D.C. He served in the Army Air Corps during World War II. He joined the Department in 1950 and served overseas in Frankfurt, Panama City, Tripoli and Benghazi. After retirement, he worked as a professional assistant for the National Academy of Sciences.



David B. Timmins, 78, a retired Foreign Service officer, died July 16 in Salt Lake City, Utah. He joined the Department in 1955 and served overseas in the United Kingdom, France, Iceland, Spain, Morocco and Guatemala. After retirement, he accompanied his wife Lola on her Foreign Service postings to France, Mexico, China, Romania and Switzerland. He taught international finance and economics at universities locally and abroad. He ran for Congress in 1996 in Utah.

Lucille A. Lawley, 86, a retired Civil Service employee, died Sept. 4 in Daytona Beach, Fla. During her 30 years with the Department, she specialized in U.S.-Soviet relations and once hosted former Soviet Ambassador Anatoly Dobrynin at her home. She also was an executive assistant to Secretary Dean Rusk. She was active in charitable giving and endowed scholarships at Georgetown University School of Nursing.



Leonard Reed, 90, a retired Voice of America journalist and freelance writer, died recently in Chevy Chase, Md. He served in the Navy during World War II before joining the U.S. Information Agency as an editor and writer. As chief of VOA's European bureau, based in Munich, his was the voice on the first VOA broadcasts into Warsaw and Moscow. Later, he was editor of *Amerika Illustrated*, a USIA magazine distributed in the Soviet Union. He was an avid tennis player.



Donald M. Welch, 86, a retired Foreign Service officer, died Aug. 28 of natural causes. He lived in Springfield, Va. He served in the Navy during World War II and joined the Department in 1949. He served overseas in Japan, Germany, Brazil, Morocco, Ecuador, Mexico, Ethiopia, Bermuda and Jamaica. His three children—Joseph, Elizabeth and David—now work for the Department as a contractor, financial management officer and assistant secretary respectively.

Adding the Extra to Extraordinary



This issue reads like a virtual resume covering many of the things the State Department does around the world. The Department partners with others for progress; colleagues expand their comfort zones to meet the challenges facing modern diplomacy; embassies “dare mighty things” to accomplish audacious goals; entire

professional cones evolve to adapt to a rapidly changing world economy; and one of the Department’s largest missions takes a candid look at a single day in its life.

Mission Mexico covers a lot of territory, from the U.S. Embassy in Mexico City to the nine U.S. consulates spread throughout our sprawling neighbor to the south. Capturing a typical day in the complex life of this huge mission took teamwork, dedication and perseverance. Generous support from the Una Chapman Cox Foundation and 200 disposable cameras from Kodak de Mexico moved the plan from the idea stage to reality. Then, 350 volunteers from all walks of the mission community aimed their cameras and clicked away.

The result: A soon-to-be-published 84-page photo book covering the breadth of mission activities and the scope of an “ordinary” day of an extraordinary mission.

Another post with an extraordinary mission, Baghdad, attracts a wide spectrum of volunteers—Foreign Service officers, Civil Service employees, contractors and Locally Employed staff from many countries. Their

reasons for volunteering also range across the board, but a fairly simple motivation led one of our LES colleagues from Bangladesh to volunteer: she wanted an up close and personal view of history in the making, even if it meant stretching her comfort zone. She got that, and more.

The emerging worldwide economic crisis has focused more attention on the Department’s economic cone officers, who operate under the broad mission mandate “to promote economic security and prosperity at home and abroad.” Once considered background players as researchers and reporters who filled in knowledge gaps, econ officers increasingly play key roles in clinching trade deals, influencing policy and legislation and explaining U.S. positions to often skeptical audiences. The numbers reflect their growing importance in the Department’s mission: From September 2003 through July 2008, the number of Foreign Service economic officers grew by 12 percent.

Last but not least, a final salute to our colleagues en route to their final posting: *Helen K. Blair; Robert M. Forcey; Lucille A. Lawley; Leonard Reed; Ruth Anne Rogers; David B. Timmins; and Donald M. Welch.* ■

Correction

Our story about the new U.S. passport cards (*State Magazine*, October 2008) incorrectly stated that they could be used for re-entry into the United States by air whereas only the U.S. passport book can be used for that purpose.

Rob Wiley
Rob Wiley
Editor-in-Chief

Coming in December

- Mission Argentina Celebrates Voting Day
- PRT Muthanna Hits the Dirt
- OES Targets Illegal Wildlife Trade
- ... and much more!

LYING IN STATE: CHIEF OF MIRTH AUTHORITY!

DIPLOMACY DOESN'T HAVE TO BE DRY, PEOPLE - WHY DOESN'T ANYONE AT THIS EMBASSY HAVE A SENSE OF HUMOR?



AMBASSADOR, WE'LL FORM A FUNNINESS WORKING GROUP TO ENCOURAGE MORE ROBUST AND FORWARD-LEANING HILARITY!

FIFTY PERCENT MORE MIRTH MANDATED FOR EACH SECTION!



ALL JOSES AND WITTICISMS WOULD HAVE TO BE CLEARED, OF COURSE.

FUNNY SOUNDS TOO...



WE COULD REQUIRE THE DUTY OFFICER TO WEAR HIS UNDERPANTS ON THE OUTSIDE - THAT WOULD BE DROLL...

WHOOPE CUSHIONS AT COUNTRY TEAM MEETINGS?



JUST PUT OUT AN ADMIN NOTICE THAT MERITORIOUS MIRTHFULNESS WILL BE CONSIDERED FAVORABLY FOR PROMOTION.



SOMETIMES I'M SO GOOD I SCARE MYSELF...



NOV2008

The 2008 Federal Benefits Open Season for the 2009 plan year begins November 10 and runs through December 8. During that time, employees may enroll in or change an enrollment in a health insurance plan under the program, enroll in a flexible spending account and enroll in or change an enrollment in a dental or vision plan under the Federal Employees Dental and Vision Insurance Program. Information on the Open Season is at www.opm.gov/insure.



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